

U.S. ARMY PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICERS AND SOCIAL
MEDIA TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

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General Studies

by

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The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author and do not necessarily represent the views of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College or any other governmental agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)

ABSTRACT

U.S. ARMY PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICERS AND SOCIAL MEDIA TRAINING REQUIREMENTS, by MAJ Cesar H. Santiago, 87 pages.

Social media platforms have become an effective and efficient method used by U.S. Army organizations to deliver and communicate messages to various audiences. U.S. Army Public Affairs Officers (PAOs) receive training based on currently established Training Programs of Instruction by the Defense Information School. The use of social media platforms by PAOs is well established, but further research on how adequately PAOs are trained and educated to effectively use social media networks needs to be further explored. The examination of academic curricula used as the basis to train public affairs students, and training and education requirements established within civilian education institutions and private industry serve as the point of departure to compare training requirements and draw conclusions that could potentially become recommendations to improve existing training standards.

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ACRONYMS

DINFOS	Defense Information School
DoD	Department of Defense
FA46	Functional Area 46
GAP	Generally Accepted Practices
IBC	Internet Based Capabilities
JEPAC	Joint Expeditionary Public Affairs Course
JIPAC	Joint Intermediate Public Affairs Course
JSPAC	Joint Senior Public Affairs Course
PA	Public Affairs
PAO	Public Affairs Officer
PAQC	Public Affairs Qualification Course

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The emergence of social media platforms has turned into one of the primary and most effective methods to directly communicate with various audiences. The dramatic impact of social media in the information environment has created a shift, and caused the necessity for private and governmental organizations to adapt and establish new methods to engage key audiences. Social media networks have become a method to communicate in nearly real time, and maintain an open and permanent dialogue with key audiences. The first media blogging sites became popular in 1999, and have grown to be significant means to deliver, maintain, and create communication capable of engaging with different people across time and space.¹ The social media impact is reflected and seen through many cultures, private organizations and business, and societies throughout the world. Its direct integration and implementation to improve the exchange of information, and to communicate, and disseminate an organization's purpose and narrative has also been implemented throughout the Department of Defense (DoD). The U.S. Army has adapted to the impact and demand of social media through the establishment of policies and guidance for the use of social media platforms.² The use of Internet and social media

¹ Drew Hendricks, "Complete History of Social Media: Then And Now," *Small Business Trends*, 8 May 2013, accessed 1 February 2016, <http://smallbiztrends.com/2013/05/the-complete-history-of-social-media-infographic.html>.

² Director, Online and Social Media Division, Office of the Chief of Public Affairs, *Memorandum, Standardizing Official U.S. Army External Official Presences (Social Media)* (Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Public Affairs, 1 November 2010), accessed 14 February 2016, http://www.usar.army.mil/Portals/98/Documents/resources_docs/Social%20Media%20Standard%20SOP.pdf.

platforms has been widely accepted and adopted by individuals and organizations at all levels. The U.S. Army has adapted to, and embraced, the evolution of social media; organizations and military leaders from the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to company commanders are now tweeting about current issues and other topics, and service web pages offer tailored news “pushes” to service members.³

The Army has established methods to make the use of social media efforts effective, and increased its social media presence. The U.S. Army began establishment for its social media presence in January 2009 through the Online and Social Media Division to drive the process for the Army to engage with its public utilizing social networking sites.⁴ On 11 September 2012, DoD published, Department of Defense Instruction 8550.01, Subject: DoD Internet Services, and Internet-Based Capabilities” (IBC), which expands and outlines elements associated with DoD social media use.⁵ In addition, the Office of Deputy Secretary of Defense published Decision-Type Memorandum (DTM) 09-026, Subject: Responsible and Effective Use of Internet-based Capabilities, instructing the responsible and effective use of Internet-based capabilities.⁶

³ Mari K. Eder, *Leading the Narrative: The Case For Strategic Communication* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2011), 7.

⁴ Davis McNally, “Army Embraces Social Media at Conference,” Official Homepage of the United States Army, 13 May 2009, accessed 1 February 2016, <http://www.army.mil/article/21011/army-embraces-social-media-at-conference/>.

⁵ Department of Defense Chief Information Office, Department of Defense Instruction 8550.01, *DoD Internet Services and Internet-Based Capabilities* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, September 2012), accessed 1 February 2016, <http://dtic.mil/whs/directives/corres/pdf/855001p.pdf>.

⁶ Deputy Secretary of Defense, Decision-Type Memorandum (DTM) 09-026, *Responsible and Effective Use of Internet-based Capabilities* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, February 2010, change 3, January 2012), 1.

Headquarters, Department of the Army Field Manual 3-61 (FM 3-61), *Public Affairs Operations*, states that Public Affairs (PA) professionals must understand the effectiveness of social media operations in communicating quickly and effectively with their public through the use of social media.⁷ The importance of the social media phenomenon not only presents a significant role that must be considered in garrison environments, but also in the operational environment in which the Public Affairs Officers (PAOs) operate while deployed. Joint Doctrine Note 2-13, *Commander's Communications Synchronization* states that key considerations that organizations must be aware of include the use of social media to engage effectively with different publics. Recommendations for the use of social media include requirements of manpower and dedicated and specialized resources.⁸ The joint doctrine document establishes that engaging effectively in social media requires that Internet-based social network platforms be monitored, and the response could require dedicated and specialized resources. Additionally, it describes that when monitoring and engaging in local and regional social media channels the planning considerations must include personnel with a distinct knowledge of social media, understanding of the social media use in the current operational environment, and legal constraints on the use of social media to influence audiences.

⁷ Headquarters, Department of the Army, Field Manual 3-61, *Public Affairs Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, April 2014), 2-13.

⁸ Joint Chiefs of Staff, Director Joint Force Development, Joint Doctrine Note 2-13, *Commander's Communication Synchronization* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, December 2013), II-14.

The adoption of social media platforms to communicate with different audiences has been virtually embraced by the majority of the U.S. Army organizations. According to The U.S. Army on Social Media website, leaders, installations, and well over three hundred active duty Army units have established their social media presence.⁹ The use of social media is relevant in communicating with key audiences that are supportive of an organization, but also the social media platforms offer an opportunity to counter adverse propaganda. The Press Office at the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan is an example of how the battle has entered the information domain through the use of Twitter. In 2011, CNN reported an instance in which the Press Office for the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan used Twitter to counter messages and claims posted on Twitter by Taliban affiliates.¹⁰ The importance and relevance of the use of social media platforms as ways to inform and communicate an organization's goal is demonstrated through the example of Arab Spring movement use of social media tools to proliferate their messages and information.¹¹ With this phenomenon as a point of departure, social media training and education should become a formalized course of instruction in the PA training and education path. The PAO must be provided with

⁹ U.S. Army, "The U.S. Army on Social Media," The Official Homepage of the United States Army, accessed 7 February 2016, <http://www.army.mil/media/socialmedia>.

¹⁰ Nick Paton Walsh, "Twitter Is New Battleground for NATO and Taliban in Afghanistan," *CNN*, updated 18 November 2011, accessed 16 February 2016, <http://www.cnn.com/2011/11/18/world/asia/afghanistan-twitter-war/index.html>.

¹¹ Catherine O'Donnell, "New Study Quantifies Use of Social Media in Arab Spring," University of Washington, 12 September 2011, accessed 7 February 2016, <http://www.washington.edu/news/2011/09/12/new-study-quantifies-use-of-social-media-in-arab-spring>.

education and training that enhances knowledge and ability to leverage the use of the social media platforms embraced by various audiences in the information environment.

Problem Background

After reviewing the training program of instruction of the various courses offered at the Defense Information School (DINFOS) that form part of the required training and education that PAOs should receive through the course of their career, a possible shortfall is found. Training focused solely on social media platforms that include training and validation on their use is non-existent as a requirement within the PAO education and training path.

The current information environment continues to evolve and the impact of social media platforms and its influence on key audiences' engagement are only likely to increase. The relevance that social media tools represent in the contemporary information environment demonstrate the importance of considering formal and required social media training to compliment guidance, directives, and organization requirements for the effective use of social media platforms. A complete study or research paper that presents a gap between the preparation of PAOs in the use of social media and the possible requirements and responsibilities was not discovered during the literature review. The recent social media impact observed and produced in the informational and operational environments suggests that reliability of communicating through the use of social media platforms warrants a look at the preparation of personnel responsible for its implementation and use.

Training and Doctrine Command Pamphlet 525-3-1 (TRADOC PAM 525-3-1), *The U.S. Army Operating Concept*, describes and anticipates the demands of future

armed conflicts, technological advances, and changes in strategic guidance and joint operating concepts, as security challenges that require the U.S. Army to innovate to ensure that forces are prepared to accomplish future missions.¹² It identifies shifts caused by competition for power and resources that occur rapidly due to the proliferation of information, and the associated increased momentum of human interaction.¹³ The interaction of people and organizations, and the access to information allows organizations to mobilize people and resources. In addition, disinformation and propaganda drive violence in support of political objectives. It is established through *The U.S. Army Operating Concept* that the comprehension of events in time requires forces capable of responding rapidly in sufficient scale to seize the initiative, control the narrative, and consolidate order. U.S. Army PA informs internal and external audiences that are key to communication objectives through the use of technological capabilities, social networking sites, and non-traditional media among other methods. This includes the responsibility of U.S. Army PAOs to maintain military organization's social media presence. The efficiency with which PAOs engage in communicating information to convey the intent and priorities of friendly forces in the informational domain contributes to the effects of U.S. Army forces to deny adversaries their ability to advance their interests through the information environment.

¹² Headquarters, Department of the Army, Training and Doctrine Command Pamphlet 525-3-1, *The U.S. Army Operating Concept (Draft)*, ver. 0.8.9.7 (Fort Eustis, VA: U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, 30 September 2014), 8.

¹³ Ibid.

Purpose of the Study

The importance of dominating the information environment through the use of social media networks has transformed the way multiple organizations communicate their narrative. The use of social media in U.S. Army organizations is well established, but further research is needed on how adequately PAOs are trained and educated to effectively use social media platforms, and how the training is incorporated in their career education, training and development.

The purpose of this study is to examine the training for to U.S. Army PAOs in the use of social media platforms to determine if the currently established courses and education requirements meet the needed understanding and knowledge to satisfy the PAO social media engagement responsibilities. The education and training in the use of social media platforms should augment the general knowledge and understanding of PAOs to communicate commander's messages through the emerging social media platforms. Responsibility to inform the public internally and externally takes the form of traditional and non-traditional methods. Social media training augments the ability to communicate key messages through online popular outlets.

The definitions and description of the social media platforms currently known in the digital world provide the context for the purposes of this study. During the conduct of this research, social media will be defined according to *Merriam-Webster*. The term social media is described as forms of electronic communication (such as websites for social networking and micro blogging); through which users create online communities

to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content (such as videos).¹⁴ The Heidi Cohen's Actionable Marketing Guide suggests that social media platforms include Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google, YouTube, Pinterest, Instagram, and Slideshare.¹⁵ According to the Decidedly Social media website, a company that offers social media marketing solutions for business, current social media platforms include: social networking sites, micro blogging sites, publishing tools, collaboration tools, photo and video sharing sites, personal broadcasting tools, virtual words, location based services, widgets, social bookmarking and news aggregation, and group buying.

The DoD utilizes IBC to disseminate and process unclassified information. DoD defines Internet-based capabilities as all public information capabilities or applications across the Internet from locations indirectly controlled by DoD or the federal government (locations not owned or operated by DoD or another federal agency or by contractors or others on behalf of DoD or another federal agency).¹⁶

The knowledge and preparation that PAOs obtain allows them to effectively synchronize the communication across tactical, operational, and strategic levels. Therefore, the level of preparation and understanding on the use of social media platforms to communicate the organization's messages, and engagement with key audiences has a significant impact in communicating through the use of social media

¹⁴ Merriam-Webster, "Social Media," accessed 15 February 2016, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/social%20media>.

¹⁵ Heidi Cohen, "Use Social Media to Reach the Right Audience for Your Business," 27 May 2015, accessed 15 February 2016, <http://heidicohen.com/social-media-platforms-2015>.

¹⁶ Department of Defense Chief Information Office, DoD Instruction 8550.01, 47.

tools. U.S. Army PAOs could expand effectiveness on audience engagement, and advance communication priorities through formalized and required social media use training integrated in Functional Area 46 (FA46) training. The information produced as a result of this study provides leaders a better understanding of how a formal program on education and training in the use of social media platforms could potentially become an additional skillset for PAOs to effectively engage key audiences.

Primary Research Question

How does PAO training provide understanding and knowledge in the use of social media platforms?

Secondary Research Question

How do current training courses validate PAO preparation in the use of social media platforms? What are possible solutions to address the potential need to establish additional social media platforms training for PAOs?

Limitations

The limitations of this study reside in the type and quantity of documents obtained during the research. The information obtained to determine the necessity of social media training for PAOs is derived from digital copies of current curricula and programs of instruction available through the DINFOS web portal. The access to information on curricula established is the only source that assists in the process to determine if PAOs received training in the use of social media platforms. The documents that provide the curriculum for each of the DINFOS courses examined through this research do not necessarily focus on the specific topic of each class, but rather specifies the scope of

information about the functional areas of study for each PA course. The research conducted utilizes electronic documents that do not reflect specific hours, if any, dedicated to the subject of social media platforms used during training of PAOs at DINFOS, but rather a description of the subject that includes the examination and discussion of social media platforms and IBCs as part of the block of instruction.

Department of the Army Pamphlet 600-3 (DA PAM 600-3), *Commissioned Officer Professional Development, and Career Management*, and Army Regulation 360-1 (AR 360-1), *Army Public Affairs Program*, and FM 3-61 are references used to explain the responsibilities and requirements for PAOs in the performance of their duties.

Delimitations

During the conduct of this research the population identified as officers refers to U.S. Army PAOs selected for or currently exercising duties and responsibilities as FA 46 officers. This thesis will not consider additional opportunities or training offered to PAOs through programs like Training with Industry or similar broadening opportunity programs that offer and provide experience and training outside the requirements established for officers assessed in FA46. The exception to this instance is the educational opportunity offered through the establishment of a Memorandum of Agreement between the U.S. Army and Georgetown University that provides the opportunity to U.S. Army officers to obtain a Master's of Public Relations and Corporate Communications. This is available to qualified officers who are selected for the program. This research is focused on examination of data that presents the training and education offered through programs of instruction that serves as the curriculum and format of PA courses offered at DINFOS, the requirements established in accordance with the DA PAM 600-3.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

When engaging with social media, operators trained to function effectively in the cultures in which we are operating will be vital assets. The “digital natives” will be critical to success in the social media environment.

—Thomas D. Mayfield III, “A Commander’s Strategy for Social Media”

The literature review presented during this study does not necessarily cover major case studies conducted within the field of PA, but rather the intent is to present through an exploratory method the current requirements, policies, and guidance established for the training and education of U.S. Army PAOs, and the use of social media platforms to communicate with key audiences. The literature review assists to establish the relevance of the subject for this research. It provides the scope and focus into the areas selected for discussion.

This chapter presents readers with information on the PAO career development description, and training and education requirements. The training development proponent for the programs of instruction and curricula is the DINFOS, Directorate of Training, Fort George Meade, Maryland. U.S. Army social media policies and guidance for the establishment and use of social media by U.S. Army organizations explains the most current information on the aspect of employment of social media programs in military organizations.

Information gathered shows the use of social media from different perspectives in the form of journal articles that present suggestions and examples in which social media programs have been established as a tool to communicate with multiple audiences in

different information environments. Through a review of articles associated with the use of social media, the literature gathered offers a view of what has been suggested, implemented, and the results of social media platforms tools in the information environment. Its intent is to provide the social media use perspective and its influence across different environments, events, and scenarios that project its relevance.

The aspect of social media use training and education is presented through literature that provides current civilian education programs and school's curricula information. This portion of the literature presents the civilian aspect of training in regards to preparation and training in the use of social media platforms. Literature collected from the private industry sector, specifically in the public relations and communicators' arena is shown to offer understanding of training opportunities available and recommended by practitioners and educators in the private sectors. The data provided through the results of a study conducted with the participation of communicators and social media practitioners is presented to provide context in the significance and increase in the use of social media platforms through the lens of civilian practitioners.

PAO Training, Education, and Career Development

DA PAM 600-3 presents the PAO career development model, and the description of assignments, and educational requirements for officers.¹⁷ The proponent for this pamphlet is the Deputy Chief of Staff, G-1, and it applies to the Active Army, the Army National Guard, and the U.S. Army Reserve, unless otherwise stated. Chapter 24 of the

¹⁷ Headquarters, Department of the Army, Department of the Army Pamphlet 600-03 (DA PAM) 600-03, *Commissioned Officer Professional Development, and Career Management Program* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, December 2014).

pamphlet describes the professional development path for U.S. Army PAOs in the ranks of captain through colonel.

Effective U.S. Army PA requires the application of professional and technical skills from the military and civilian sectors.¹⁸ In accordance with the DA PAM 600-3, PAOs selected for FA 46, must attend the required training and education established for this career field. In addition, to display a wide range of skills, attributes, and knowledge, U.S. Army PAOs must demonstrate outstanding leadership. Formal education for officers assessed in FA 46 includes attendance to the nine-week resident Public Affairs Officer Qualification Course (PAQC) at DINFOS, Fort Meade, MD prior to the first PA assignment.¹⁹

PAOs selected through a Department of Army board attend the Command General and Staff College resident and satellite courses respectively. The required education referred to in DA PAM 600-3 identifies the Joint Professional Military Education II for U.S. Army officers as a requirement for PAOs in the rank of major. U.S. Army PAOs in the rank of lieutenant colonel must attend the Joint Intermediate Public Affairs Course (JIPAC) and completion of Joint Professional Military Education II. Education requirements that FA 46 officers should attend at the rank of colonel include the resident or non-resident Senior Service College and the Joint Senior Public Affairs Course (JSPAC). The U.S. Army PAO development model is shown in figure 1.

¹⁸ Headquarters, Department of the Army, DA PAM 600-3, 254.

¹⁹ Ibid., 258.

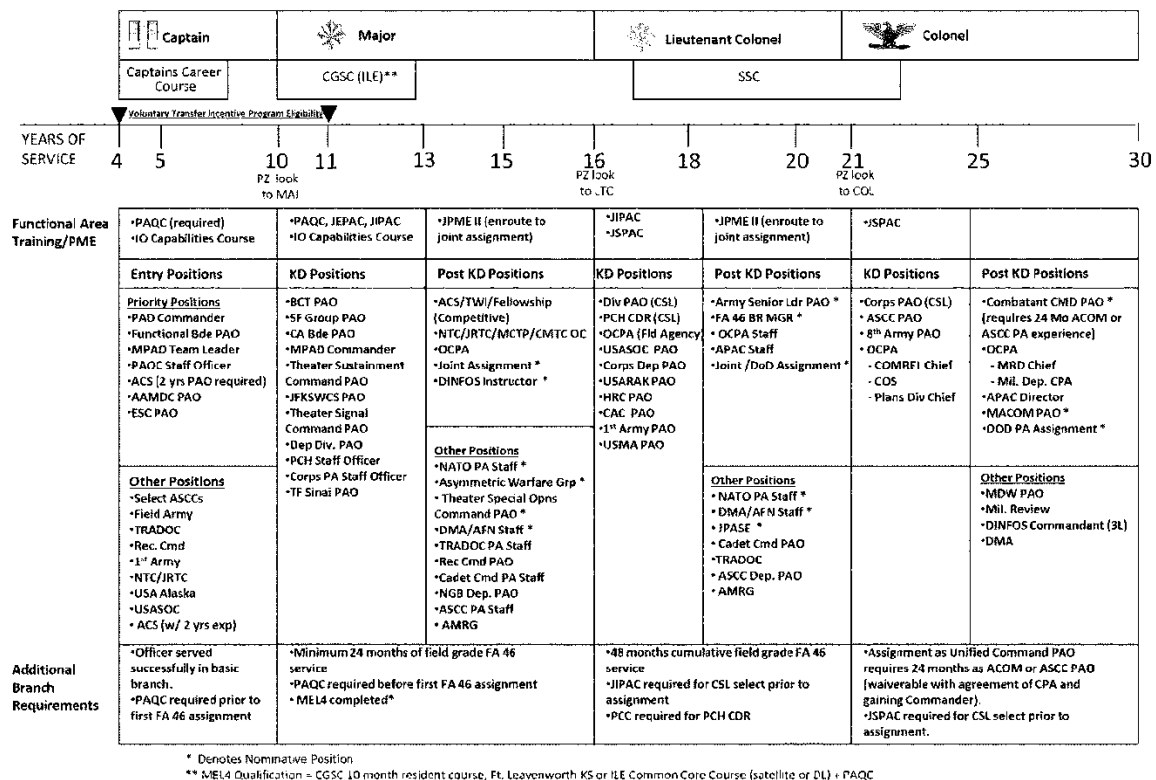


Figure 1. Army PA Development Model

Source: Headquarters, Department of the Army, Department of the Army Pamphlet 600-3, *Commissioned Officer Professional Development, and Career Management Program* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, December 2014), 261.

The educational and training requirements established in DA PAM 600-3 for FA46 officers are part of the active duty officer development model. The model provides required and additional training, as well as assignment positions that PAOs must serve in throughout their career.

AR 360-1 establishes policies and procedures that serve as the guidelines for the conduct of PA.²⁰ It includes among its thirteen chapters the guidelines for U.S. Army PAOs to advise commanders regarding the PA needs of the command, formulation and release of command messages, and the development of programs. It also states guidelines for command and public information, including information released to the media, and community relations programs intended for internal and external audiences with interest in the U.S. Army.²¹ The document establishes the staff relationship of the PAO, identifies PA as an inherently governmental function, and requires commanders to designate a unit PA representative to units without formal PAO representation.

The Training Program of Instruction for PAQC offered at DINFOS describes the academic education and training offered to PA students at the entry level. The entry level PA training and curriculum consists of ten functional areas focused on foundational elements of the communication planning process, principles and techniques associated with implementing effective communication strategies, and the process involved in integrating communication into military planning and operations.²² During the course students learn about the mission of DoD PA and its functions. Training includes classes on understanding the PAOs' roles, and the key players in the information environment. Students are presented with information and principles about the foundations of

²⁰ Headquarters, Department of the Army, Army Regulation 360-1, *The Army Public Affairs Program* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, May 2011), 1.

²¹ *Ibid.*, i.

²² Commandant Defense Information School, "Training Program of Instruction for DINFOS PAQC Public Affairs Qualification Course" (Defense Information School, Fort George G. Meade, MD, 26 February 2014), 2.

communications and communication theories. The functional areas covered during the period of instruction include writing fundamentals, and the role of PA in synchronized communication strategies related to national, strategic, and theater of operations level.

The approved program of instruction offers the students the opportunity to learn and study the different laws and regulations governing the protection of information. The instruction offered during the principles of communication portion of the course includes: security; accuracy; propriety and policy; ability; competency and authority; and the Freedom of Information Act; Privacy Act; Health, Insurance, Portability and Accountability Act; and defamation and copyrights.²³ This unit of instruction also supports principles linked to the command information program, and research with an emphasis in establishing quantitative and qualitative research mechanisms, and a look at the possible key audiences for a command information program. Particular attention in this section of the training program is directed to the effectiveness of product and processes utilized within the command information program. It includes instruction on effective command messages, themes, and talking points, and a look at how news media develop their news packages. Key information on the development of news topics includes the principal elements of the news, lead, bridges, and headlines. Students also examine the importance of different types of audiences, and how it relates to communicating a command message. Additionally, the students learn and demonstrate writing and copy-editing skills required for future lessons as well as PA responsibilities.

²³ Commandant Defense Information School, "Training Program of Instruction for DINFOS PAQC," 7.

The PAQC program of instruction includes training outcomes that explain PA engagement methods. The period of instruction established trains students on the preparation of media kits, coordination of key leader engagements, response to news media queries, and preparation and coordination of a news press conference to include advice and preparation for command spokespersons. Use and principles of visual information is part of the PA engagement methods instruction. Students learn how to capture images and the basic elements of composition. Training provides learning principles, and instruction on policy and content for government websites. It includes the principles of IBC engagement and best practices.²⁴

The communicating planning phase of the course consists of media engagements and crisis communications development. It includes the application of IBC, communication problem-solving strategies, on-camera interviews, and effective crisis management strategies. Students conduct informal research to establish a communication plan that includes its implementation. During the communication-planning portion of the course the students examine and learn about the Joint Operational Planning Process and the Adaptive Planning and Execution processes. Students analyze these processes and become familiar with the requirements during the planning process from the PA perspective.

The instruction on PA and military operations assists students to develop writing communication skills, media engagement scenarios, and an on-camera interview. It includes discussion and review of PA support to civil authorities to include policy and

²⁴ Commandant Defense Information School, “Training Program of Instruction for DINFOS PAQC,” 9.

guidelines for support to DoD. The components and procedures of the National Response Framework, Emergency Support Function-15, National Incident Management System, and Joint Information Center are also covered during this portion of the course. Students discuss and review the role of interagency and combined non-government organization coordination. During this period of instruction future PAOs analyze media coverage of military operations to include the review of joint PA guidelines for media access, ground rules, and security review. The topics include: media embeds, joint regulations and processes for developing media pools, and the concept of DoD strategic communication. The simulation of an operational environment provides the scenario for students to study the joint task force PA structure, joint manning documents, PA guidance, mission, and staffing requirements, and considerations related to a theater strategy.²⁵ Discussion about the process to integrate the Defense Imagery Management Operations Center is also covered in this period of instruction.

The second part of PA and military operations allows the students the opportunity to explore and discuss media expectations of PA personnel. The program of instruction offers discussion of information operations, PA/visual information resource management discussion, and review of equipment and personnel requirements. The students are exposed to a discussion panel with PA personnel that bring students their perspectives and emerging issues within the PA arena. The block of instruction offers a performance-based exercise focused on remote interviewing skills.

²⁵ Commandant Defense Information School, “Training Program of Instruction for DINFOS PAQC,” 12.

The PAQC provides periods during the course for DoD services representatives (Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force) to discuss matters with future PAOs that provide them with an understanding of current strategies and PA activities that support their specific service. The students conclude their training with a field training exercise in which students conduct PA support of a simulated joint task force operation.²⁶ The PAQC Training Program of Instruction functional areas are shown in table 1.

Table 1. PAQC Training Program of Instruction Functional Areas	
Functional Area	Program Content
Functional Area 1	Foundations of PA
Functional Area 2	Principles of Communications
Functional Area 3	PA Engagement Methods
Functional Area 4	Media Engagements and Crisis Communications
Functional Area 5	Communication Planning
Functional Area 6	PA and Military Operations I
Functional Area 7	PA and Military Operations II
Functional Area 8	Service Specific Training
Functional Area 9	Operational Support Exercise
Functional Area 10	Course Administration

Source: Created by author using information from Commandant Defense Information School, “Training Program of Instruction for DINFOS PAQC Public Affairs Qualification Course” (Defense Information School, Fort George G. Meade, MD, 26 February 2014), 2.

The JIPAC Training Program of Instruction consists of PA training and education aimed at mid-grade PAOs. The purpose of the JIPAC is to provide intermediate education and training to prepare PAOs to execute their required responsibilities and duties within

²⁶ Commandant Defense Information School, “Training Program of Instruction for DINFOS PAQC,” 15.

the operational domain. JIPAC enhances students' knowledge and skills needed to perform the duties of a PA practitioner at the operational level.²⁷ The course is primarily directed to PAOs that are scheduled or identified to perform duties as a part of a deployed joint task force.²⁸ PAOs selected for this course must be in the rank of captain through lieutenant colonel. Officers must have completed Professional Military Education level training and the PAQC. With a total of 208 academic hours, the course is divided into four distinct functional areas that include lectures, performance exercises, written examination, and lecture-field training. The communication theory functional area block of instruction offers students the opportunity to assess contemporary communication theory concepts and principles that include innovations and emerging media capabilities.²⁹ This period of instruction includes discussion of the information environment, ethical principles of military communications, policies concerning operational environment strategic communications, legal considerations, and best practices.

The functional area concerning operational PA introduces students to military communication capabilities and examines joint military operations non-kinetic effects capabilities. Students learn the PA's role on mission rehearsal, and examine commander and staff advising from the PA perspective. This section of the course offers students an opportunity to discuss communication tactics, media operations in joint operational

²⁷ Commandant Defense Information School, "Training Program of Instruction for DINFOS-JIPAC Joint Intermediate Public Affairs Course" (Defense Information School, Fort George G. Meade, MD, 26 February 2014), 3.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid., 6.

environments, and how visual information supports PA in the operational environment.³⁰

Part of the instruction covered during the operational PA unit of instruction includes how visual information supports PA in operational environments while operating with government agencies, non-U.S. government organizations, and sources of social influences on inter-cultural communication.

The JIPAC program offers a functional area focused on communication strategy development. The instruction provides students with lessons on how to develop a strategic communication plan and evaluate its effectiveness. Assessment tools and methods that include analysis and communication research findings are covered during this period. As part of planning offered during training, the students discuss the responsibilities in the Adaptive Planning & Execution System and Joint Operational Planning Process. Instruction includes developing the capabilities-based PA Joint Manning Document and Annex Y (Strategic Communications) plan. The JIPAC Training Program of Instruction functional areas are shown in table 2.

³⁰ Commandant Defense Information School, “Training Program of Instruction for DINFOS-JIPAC,” 7.

Table 2. JIPAC Training Program of Instruction Functional Areas	
Functional Area	Program Content
Functional Area 1	Communication Theory
Functional Area 2	Operational PA
Functional Area 3	Communications Strategy Development
Functional Area 4	Administration

Source: Created by author using information from Commandant Defense Information School, “Training Program of Instruction for DINFOS-JIPAC Joint Intermediate Public Affairs Course” (Defense Information School, Fort George G. Meade, MD, 26 February 2014), 2.

The Joint Expeditionary Public Affairs Course (JEPAC) offers training to PA students to assist them in the conduct of PA duties and responsibilities in a contingency environment. This course is also listed as the Joint Contingency Public Affairs Course on the DINFOS course catalog information webpage. PAOs selected for JEPAC, study and practice planning and execution of PA operations unique to a contingency environment with emphasis on operational planning and integration on a joint staff.³¹ The program re-emphasizes basic and intermediate PAO skills while applied in a contingency operations environment. PAOs selected to attend this course must be graduates of the JSPAC or PAQC. PAOs selected for this course must be in the rank of captain through lieutenant colonel. The course length amounts to a total of seventy-six academic hours that consist of education and training focused on Functional Area 1 Contingency Public Affairs.³²

³¹ Commandant Defense Information School, “Training Program of Instruction for DINFOS-JEPAC Joint Expeditionary Public Affairs Course” (Defense Information School, Fort George G. Meade, MD, 13 November 2013), 3.

³² *Ibid.*, 4.

During the course, PAOs examine the characteristics of the contingency environment with PA training aimed at foreign operations in less mature theaters. The program states that students learn about the importance of their role in contingency PA in supporting both command information at home station and public diplomacy overseas. PAOs develop skills in crisis communication management techniques within contingency PA operations, and discuss the critical role of PAOs in joint military operations. The training includes practice and application of the Joint Operations Planning Process to include PA inputs and outputs. Students analyze the relationship between information operations, civil affairs, and PA. The initial block of instruction during the course offers students the opportunity to examine a case study to illustrate the process.

The JEPAC training includes a field training exercise in which students develop and apply operational PA planning. During the exercise PAOs develop a communication plan in support of contingency operations. As part of the training, students receive instruction on how to develop a communication plan. The JEPAC course offers PAOs an opportunity to learn to identify the components of media facilitation and to produce PA input for the operations plan to include identifying PA personnel and equipment requirements. The students apply the PA considerations into the base order and relevant annexes. During this phase of the course, the students apply their knowledge through communication counsel to senior instructors. The performance of the PAOs in their application of PA skills and knowledge is measured in accordance with the curriculum performance exercises. Students produce a PA annex and write PA guidance, and present a decision briefing. The operational PA execution phase described in the JEPAC training explains how PAOs train in the execution of their roles while participating in boards,

bureaus, cells, centers, and working groups as well as joint and combined media operations in a simulated contingency environment. The curriculum for this course states that students also apply DOD ethical standards to the expeditionary environment.

DA PAM 600-3 states that the JSPAC is required prior to assignment to a PA colonel command select position. The JSPAC offers senior PAOs training and education to prepare for the responsibilities in a joint environment at a combatant, component, or non-DoD equivalent level.³³ Senior PAOs receive training on producing communication strategies and plans in support of commander's objectives through all phases of operations.³⁴ The course description included in the program document states that JSPAC includes a capstone experience to senior PAOs. The course offers FA 46 officers an opportunity to hone their skills as senior communication counselors and strategic planners through panel and guided discussions with senior leaders and mentors.³⁵ FA 46 officers analyze and discuss case studies and produce operational strategies during group and individual exercises. PAOs attending this course must be in the ranks of lieutenant colonel or colonel. Completion of the JIPAC course is recommended according to the course prerequisites. The JSPAC program has seventy-six academic hours that consist of five PA training functional areas.

The training focus during the functional area 1 instruction consists of leadership and organizational ethics. Students discuss ethical considerations of organizational

³³ Commandant Defense Information School, "Training Program of Instruction for DINFOS-JSPAC Joint Senior Public Affairs Course" (Defense Information School, Fort George G. Meade, MD, 23 April 2014), 3.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

communication, and explore internal and external cultural dynamics.³⁶ According to the JSPAC curriculum, instruction offers students an overview of lessons learned through the discussion of case studies that highlight military, political, and civilian leaders, and PAOs, and how they have succeeded and failed in applying ethical decision-making in an operational environment.

National policy and DoD joint PA doctrine is covered during the functional area 2 block of instruction of the course. PAOs examine national policy, doctrine, and guidance, and how it links to U.S. values and security objectives with diplomatic, informational, military, and economic instruments of power employed across the whole government.³⁷ Students discuss how unified combatant commanders translate national policy level type of guidance into theater strategy, campaign plans, and security cooperation activities, and how it can provide context in linking the operational lines of effort. PAOs review communication planning in the joint/interagency environment, as well as PA's role in the National Response Framework.

Functional area 3 of the curriculum examines communication best practices and the information environment. Students discuss the interplay among the U.S. government, non-governmental, and inter-governmental organizations in the informational environment. The training program also offers an opportunity for students to learn how effective communication can inform operational planning, support commander's intent, and work with the support of other countries and coalition partners in advancing common

³⁶ Commandant Defense Information School, "Training Program of Instruction for DINFOS-JSPAC," 6.

³⁷ Ibid., 7.

interests.³⁸ Instruction offers students an opportunity to review the critical role of communication synchronization and interagency coordination, and fundamental solutions to assists communicators to verbalize and produce synchronized messages.

Functional area 4 is described in the training program as an area that includes subjects in communication research planning, implementation, and assessment in an operational environment. It is primarily centered on fundamentals of good communication planning, focusing on research, planning implementation, and evaluation tools as well as qualitative and quantitative assessment processes. Students discuss opportunities for applying research data that includes polling or focus groups, and risk assessments. PAOs practical exercises include planning objectives and end states, and development of research and assessment frameworks to measure communication effectiveness for operational scenarios.³⁹

PAOs explore and discuss senior command relationships and communication strategy development during a capstone exercise as part of instruction received during the functional area 5 block of instruction. The course audience reviews the Adaptive Planning and Execution system, and utilizes operational planning procedures and doctrine to support communicators in the formulation and synchronized delivery of messages. PAOs apply their knowledge and experience during a capstone exercise in which they translate the commander's intent into a communication strategy to achieve

³⁸ Commandant Defense Information School, "Training Program of Instruction for DINFOS-JSPAC," 8.

³⁹ Ibid., 9.

operational goals and effects. The JSPAC Training Program of Instruction functional areas are shown in table 3.

Table 3. JSPAC Training Program of Instruction Functional Areas	
Functional Area	Program Content
Functional Area 1	Leadership and Organizational Ethics
Functional Area 2	National Policy and DoD Joint PA Doctrine
Functional Area 3	Communication Best Practices and the Information Environment
Functional Area 4	Communication Research, Planning, Implementation and Assessment in an Operational Environment
Functional Area 5	Senior Command Relationships and Communication Strategy Development: Capstone Exercise
Functional Area 6	Course Administration

Source: Created by author using information from Commandant Defense Information School, “Training Program of Instruction for DINFOS-JSPAC Joint Senior Public Affairs Course” (Defense Information School, Fort George G. Meade, MD, 23 April 2014), 2.

In 2009, the U.S. Army Chief of Public Affairs and the Dean of Georgetown University’s School of Continuing Studies signed a Memorandum of Agreement that provides the opportunity to U.S. Army officers to obtain a Master’s of Public Relations and Corporate Communications. The agreement allows Army Human Resources Command to select candidate officers who meet the pre-requisites to attend an eighteen-month program at the school followed by an assignment in the field of PA. The Masters of Professional Studies in Public Relations and Corporate Communications gives selected candidates the opportunity to learn through theory and practice methods and concepts to employ in the field of public relations. The program offers students classes that help them develop the knowledge and skills needed to perform in the communications industry. The

methods learned through the program include content that covers the strategic, digital, and global environment.⁴⁰ According to the program's curriculum, the model helps students develop their skills in strategy and critical thinking, clear writing and storytelling, emerging industry trends, and applied learning.⁴¹ The curriculum includes twenty-six courses that include an internship that allows the student to experience working with organizations in the communication industry. The courses are related to the use and application of social media platforms. The program includes periods of instruction that enable students to explore and learn processes and methods to utilize digital analysis tools, social media platforms, digital public opinion, and specialized reports.

U.S. Army Social Media Policies and Guidelines

The U.S. Army amplifies its social media guidelines to soldiers and family members through the *United States Army Social Media Handbook*. The *United States Army Social Media Handbook*, version 3.2 published in March 2014, explains the context of social media, and how soldiers and families can make the best use of social Internet based communication platforms. Its content also explains how U.S. Army organizations can use social media effectively.⁴²

⁴⁰ Georgetown University School of Continuing Studies, "Master's in Public Relations and Corporate Communications," accessed 15 February 2016, <http://scs.georgetown.edu/departments/12/master-of-professional-studies-in-public-relations-corporate-communications/home>.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Office of the Chief of Public Affairs, *The United States Army Social Media Handbook*, ver. 3.1 (Washington, DC: Online and Social Media Division, January 2013),

Information on social media registration, a social media directory for Army DoD organizations, and the establishment and maintenance of social media presence is provided through the document. It includes steps required on implementation and examples of different social media platforms and their use and application.

The safety aspect during the use and application of social media networks is addressed through guidance and best practices that include safety tips and U.S. Army operational security aspects during initial and current use of social media platforms. The handbook offers guidelines and best practices on social media use during crisis as a mode to communicate command information, advise on social media standards for U.S. Army leaders and subordinates, and information on social media impersonations.

Within U.S. Army organizations, social media officers or representatives are often responsible for the content and branding of web portals. The handbook offers information on U.S. Army branding specific websites with tips and guides that are consistent with U.S. Army branding. An example of blogging to include its purpose and most useful methods of application is included through the illustration of the of the U.S. Army's official blog, Army Live.

The handbook includes short summaries of case studies from the operational environment as a mode of explaining and facilitating understanding of social media platforms use and the opportunities that different applications provide in deployed and garrison environments. U.S. Army PAOs can also find information on the purpose and tools available through the U.S. Army Public Affairs portal that can be accessed through

accessed 12 November 2015, <http://www.vdf.virginia.gov/pdf/Public%20Affairs/201301%20Army%20Social%20Media%20Handbook%20V3.1.pdf>, 2.

the Army Knowledge Online website. The handbook offers a guide with dos and don'ts for Facebook and Twitter, and a section dedicated to frequently asked questions and answers to assist users and managers of social media platforms.

The *United States Army Social Media Handbook* concludes its content of information with a glossary of common social media networking terms and a list of social media resources available to social media managers, soldiers, and families.⁴³ The enclosures section of the document includes copies of DoD Instruction 8550.01, Army Standard Operating Procedures for Official U.S. Army External Presences, Delegation of Authority Approval of External Official Presences, and ALARACT 421/2011, Army Operational Security Training for External Presence Sites Operators.

Documents that establish responsibilities, policy, and guidelines for DoD and Department of the Army regarding the official and unofficial use of social media include a memorandum from the Office of the Deputy Secretary of Defense, DTM 09-026, that establishes DoD policies and assigns responsibilities for the effective use of IBC including social media networking services. On September 2012, the publication of DoD Instruction 8550.01 took precedence over DTM 09-026. The publication of this document establishes policies, assigns responsibilities, and implements instructions for the establishment, operation, and maintenance of DoD information services on unclassified networks to collect, disseminate, store, and process unclassified DoD information.⁴⁴ The applicability of the document includes the Office of the Secretary of Defense, military

⁴³ Office of the Chief of Public Affairs, *The United States Army Social Media Handbook*, 34.

⁴⁴ Department of Defense Chief Information Office, DoD Instruction 8550.01, 1.

departments, and the Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, combatant commands, the Office of the Inspector General of the DoD, defense agencies, DoD field activities, and organizations within the DoD.⁴⁵ The United States Army Social Media Handbook contains three enclosures which provide information on responsibilities of DoD departments as well as procedures for DoD, public, and private Internet services, and information on specific external official presence requirements.

The emergence of social media platforms use in the military domain became a popular medium to provide new methods of sharing information and news with the service members, civilian employees, families, and the public. As the Army adopted the methods and concepts offered through social media platforms, it also adopted the forms to established U.S. Army official presences on social media. The Department of the Army Online Social Media Division established guidelines and procedures that delineate the standards for Army-wide external official presences in social media sites. The memorandum lists the standards that all U.S. Army external official presences must adhere to when establishing pages on social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, YouTube, blogs, and any other social network platform.⁴⁶ The standardizing official presences over social media memorandum establishes that organizations joining the social media sites must be categorized as government page, approved by commanders, utilize official name and logos, instructions and posting guidelines, operational security information, and instructions on the required registration of social media pages on the

⁴⁵ Ibid., 1.

⁴⁶ Director, Online and Social Media Division, *Standardizing Official U.S. Army External Official Presences (Social Media)*, 1.

U.S. Army social media page. The document includes guidelines in reference to the establishment of Family Readiness Group social media pages as a method to provide information to the public. This document, published in November 2010, forms part of the guidance and efforts that Army social media provides for the establishment and effective use of the social network platforms that can be use as the conduit to provide information to the U.S. Army audience.

The Office of the Chief of Public Affairs Online and Social Division provides social media managers and PAOs with an extensive source of information on social media through the U.S. Army Slideshare page. This repository of social media information is accessible to anyone. A useful webpage offers over one hundred PowerPoint presentations on the use and application of social media tools. The webpage includes U. S. Army social media updates, tips, policy, social media reports, lessons learned, and information on new social media platform features. The Slideshare page provides approximately twenty uploaded documents that include U.S. Army and DoD social media policies, social media platforms guides for military organizations, reference sheets, operational security and network sites safety tips, and information on social media strategies.⁴⁷

Social Media Use, and Civilian Education and Training Opportunities

As established by Chuck Crossett and Ronald J. Buikema, in “Analysis of Social Movements in Warfare,” insurgencies are also embracing the use of social media to

⁴⁷ U.S. Army, “U.S. Army Slideshare,” The Official Slideshare of the United States Army, accessed 6 March 2016, <http://www.slideshare.net/USArmySocialMedia/presentations>.

advance their propaganda, and communicate with key sectors in the population.

“Insurgents groups have demonstrated that they are quite advanced in applying emerging technologies to their communications strategy,” state Crossett and Buikema.⁴⁸ Their analysis states that studying the narrative and propaganda being used by the adversary can provide keen insight into how the military should shape its own message campaign.⁴⁹

Reviews on the use and effectiveness of social media networks have been conducted and analyzed from different perspectives. A study published by the Joint Forces Staff College, Joint and Combined Warfighting School in 2009, explores the influence through social media platforms. “Next-Generation Strategic Communication: Building Influence Through Online Social Media,” provides conditions and methods utilized by a group of students on the social network site Facebook to urge people to march against the Colombian narco-terrorist group, Armed Revolutionary Forces of Colombia, for kidnapping hostages. Part of the findings within the study offers that successful online social network use included videos, messages, and documents posted on Facebook to appeal to their intended audience.⁵⁰ According to the study, the results of the social media platform method utilized included reactions of over six million people in

⁴⁸ Chuck Crossett and Ronald Buikema, “Analysis of Social Movements in Warfare,” *Johns Hopkins APL Technical Digest* 30, no. 1 (2011): 9.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ LtCol Gerald R. Gendron Jr., USAF, MAJ Herminio Blas-Irizarry, USA, and Jesse W. Boggs, DON, “Next Generation Strategic Communication: Building Influence Through Online Social Networking” (Paper, Joint Forces Staff College, Joint and Combined Warfighting School, Norfolk, VA, 1 June 2009), 5.

185 cities around the world that marched against the Colombian narco-terrorist group in February 2008.⁵¹

Institutions, organizations, and governments across the world have been affected by the presence of social media platforms. In July 2015, the government of the United Kingdom published a document through its Department of Education that serves as a guide for schools on how terrorists groups such as the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria use social media to encourage travel to Syria and Iraq. The intent of the publication is to offer school officials with education on how to detect possible attempts to contact students through the use of social media platforms. The document includes information and actions that schools should take in protecting students from possible recruitment through social media websites. The information points out propaganda themes used by the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria to attract and recruit young people. It includes a list of social media platforms that include: Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, Tumblr, and private messaging as part of the social networking tools to communicate and promulgate the organization's intent and recruiting efforts. The information concludes with a reference list of terms and common language used by the terrorist group that reinforces its religious case.

In 2010, Thomas D. Mayfield III, wrote an article about the potential that social media has in supporting the commander's strategy. His article, "A Commander's Strategy for Social Media," published in *Joint Force Quarterly* in 2011, points out the challenges that come with the application of social media in conflicts and events as well as opportunities that the use of social media tools provide to achieve goals through the

⁵¹ Ibid., 5.

informational environment. Mayfield states that social media platforms could assist in providing understanding of the information environment in which military forces operate. The concerns and reactions of the populace, communities, organizations, and leaders through social media platforms become an effective and accessible source of information.

The use of technology combined with social media network sites allows individuals to transmit information in nearly real time. The opportunity that the World Wide Web provides through social media applications enables direct and instant sharing of information from virtually any location. Mayfield states in his article that groups can be mobilized to support a cause by people located in a safe and secure area, pointing that social media effects can be achieved across physical barriers.

The author of the article presents some of his arguments through the example of an event in which citizens from Iran reacted to information on social media websites like YouTube about alleged harsh responses from the Iranian government against protesters in Tehran after the 2009 Iranian presidential election. The results of the images and information posted on various social media websites included reactions of people through editorials about the protest and the Iranian government's oppressive reactions. The author mentions that Twitter reported millions of tweets, most condemning the Iranian government and its supporters. Various social media websites were used to communicate information about the protests to include places to avoid due to the presence of law enforcement authorities or military forces.⁵² Mayfield suggests that observing interaction

⁵² Thomas D. Mayfield III, "A Commander's Strategy for Social Media," *Joint Force Quarterly*, no. 60 (1st Quarter 2011): 80, accessed 9 February 2016, <https://lumen.cgsccarl.com/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.lumen.cgsccarl.com/docview/853645067?accountid=28992>.

of the populace in a given environment through the use of social media, commanders would be able to obtain a better understanding of the society that occupies the environment in which they are currently operating. Examples include the Department of State use of social media networking to measure and assess attitudes within populations. He mentions the use of social media by U.S. embassies in nations throughout the world to maintain relationships with the local populace. According to Mayfield, the presence of social media can enable commanders to identify potential threats and possible trends within the population. The article suggests methods for the employment of social media to achieve the goals stated by the commander. It also suggests establishment of social media programs as a valuable resource to information effects. The integration of social media monitoring to function in an information gathering capacity to provide the content of the current trends of information in social media, is suggested.

The article mentions that the aspect of security in the social media environment is of importance. Mayfield points out that security aspects must be considered when using social media websites and establishing the programs. Mayfield's article addresses the suggestion that processes to conduct and utilize social media tools should consider timely actions to get in front of the adversary in the informational arena. A consideration of social media platforms as outreach tools to enable cooperation with the populace and other organizations is recommended by the author. The methods and tools to effectively use social media platforms must be accompanied by a series of resources. Mayfield suggests that part of effective social media use lies in the service members' talents and skills. The author concludes his article stating that that social media is influencing the way information travels across the globe. Use and collaboration that integrates the use of

social media in conflict are factors that will be reflected in future conflicts. He suggests that given the trends that are occurring in the information environment, changes on the approach and establishment of the commander's information strategy through social media should be implemented and integrated as tasks to improve the ability to communicate and effect the operational environment.⁵³

The communication through social media has increased and expanded throughout societies, organizations, and institutions. The social media effect has caused the U.S. Army to implement guidelines that assist leaders with the use of social media among service members. Chondra Perry points out in her article published by *Military Review*, "Social Media and the Army," that military leaders are acknowledging the existence and importance of social media, and are taking steps to integrate the change into their organizations.⁵⁴ With crowds exchanging information through social media platforms across the World Wide Web, the U.S. Army created its Social Media Division to guide the institution in the efforts of creating presence, sharing information, news and a new method of communication.⁵⁵ As part of the countless methods to utilize media, soldiers communicate and share their stories through websites such as Facebook, YouTube, and Flickr among others. Perry points out that with the adaptation of social media by numerous service members the military leaders have welcomed the trend that has become a communication formality. Perry mentions that the social media tools have served in the

⁵³ Mayfield.

⁵⁴ Chondra Perry, "Social Media, and the Army," *Military Review* (March-April 2010): 63, accessed 10 February 2016, http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/milreview/perry_social_media.pdf.

⁵⁵ McNally.

conduct of town hall meetings allowing more participants to contribute to the forums in real time.⁵⁶ The importance of social media presence has become integral to the U.S. Army's methods to communicate with their audience. Perry states that the U.S. Army's presence in social media essentially opens dialogue and brings and facilitates participation between the U.S. Army and its audience.

The trend and techniques of using social media are also seen across businesses that look to engage the public. Robert J. Pliska states in an article published by *Real Estate Issues*, that real benefits are obtained through the implementation and use of social media sites. According to Pliska in his article, "Social Media: Identifying the Business Opportunities," his firm is the only national commercial real estate firm mandating one percent use of social media by its advisors.⁵⁷ With the potential to increase revenue, expand presence and market products and services, executives like Pliska have adopted and integrated the use of social media as a required tool for his organization and its customers. The benefits that social media platforms produce are similar to those that U.S. Army organizations seek to obtain through social network sites; increase in visibility of the organization's content and a virtual presence a click away.

⁵⁶ Perry, 64.

⁵⁷ Robert J. Pliska, "Social Media: Identifying the Business Opportunities," *Real Estate Issues* 37, no. 1 (2012): 49, accessed 10 February 2016, http://fw8pk7vf4q.search.serialssolutions.com/?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2004&ctx_enc=info%3Aofi%2Fenc%3AUTF-8&rft_id=info:sid/summon.serialssolutions.com&rft_val_fmt=info:ofi/fmt:kev:mtx:journal&rft.genre=article&rft.atitle=Social+Media%3A+Identifying+the+Business+Opportunities%3A+The+Personal+Experiences+of+a+Social+Media+User&rft.jtitle=Real+Estate+Issues&rft.au=Robert+J+Pliska&rft.date=2012-07-01&rft.pub=Counselors+of+Real+Estate%2C+The&rft.issn=0146-0595&rft.volume=37&rft.issue=1&rft.space=48&rft.externalDocID=2773639201¶mdict=en-US.

Many public relations and public information practitioners search for opportunities to improve and adapt the best practices in the world of social media. The digital world offers the practitioners with opportunities to advance their knowledge through, conferences, online webinars, and interactive courses. The necessity to reach to key audiences and become social media savvy has become a priority to public information and public relations officers in government and private organizations. The phenomenon of technology that supports Internet and social network communication has caused practitioners in the information domain to constantly look for opportunities to obtain the most advanced and current training to fill the need of knowledge, and to advance the organizational online presence. The Hootsuite webpage indicates that over one hundred thousand people have received training in the use of social media.⁵⁸

The spectrum of digital information, particularly the social media platforms arena has caused many organizations in the field and individuals to explore options to remain competitive and amplify the existing opportunities to deliver their message. Ragan.com, a Lawrence Ragan Communications Incorporated website, offers interactive courses that assist the communicator with a variety of tools, best practice alternatives and recommendations, and strategies to engage the organization's audience. The organization provides its members and general public with over one hundred video presentations, interactive workshops, and webcasts that utilize digital Internet connection as the

⁵⁸ Ryan Chynces and Michelle Kostya, "Why You Should Initiate Social Media Training for Your Employees and 4 Ways to Make It Stick," *Hootsuite*, 5 October 2015, accessed 14 February 2016, <http://blog.hootsuite.com/why-you-should-initiate-social-media-training-for-your-employees-and-4-ways-to-make-it-stick/>.

platform to provide instruction on the use of social media.⁵⁹ The service offers free online content to practitioners. Boot Camp Digital, a company dedicated to social media, Internet marketing, and digital training provide customers with live and online social media certification training through over thirty modules that offer communicators training and education on the best tools and strategies for online presence. According to its website, businesses interested in social media increased 130% in 2013.⁶⁰

Universities and colleges have identified the necessity of offering future students a degree in social media. As recent emerging job opportunities in the digital communication culture communication continue to rise, schools have made courses available through on-campus and on-online programs. Social media degrees enable students to obtain an accredited degree in social media management. Institutions that are supportive of the social media education and programs offer degrees that range from a social media certificate to a full master's degree program specializing in social media.

The University of Southern California, Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism offers a Master's of Science in Digital Social Media Degree. The program emphasizes leadership and management of digital and social media, and online communities. The program provides students with courses intended to teach conceptualization, management of development and analytics, creation of content, and implementation of digital products. The program consists of thirty-two units covered in

⁵⁹ Ragan Communications, "Training," accessed 3 March 2015, <https://store.ragan.com/?listshow=Training&catid=2F63AA20BF4C44EBA3ABE17E86C25743#>.

⁶⁰ Boot Camp Digital, "Training," accessed 17 February 2016, <http://bootcampdigital.com/training>.

one calendar year to include a capstone project. The final project includes an assigned budget to develop and implement a working social media product. The course requirements include, introduction to social media, managing technologies for digital media, final project capstone, analytics and research methodology, digital media policy, law, practices, and regulation.⁶¹

The William Allen White School of Journalism and Mass Communications at the University of Kansas offers students an online Masters of Digital Content Strategy through the certification of students in two areas: Certificate in Social Media Strategy, and Data Interpretations and Communication. The social media strategy certificate trains students in social media content and campaigns to include necessary skills to create, analyze, and optimize social network platform's content.⁶² The Social Media Strategy Certificate consists of fifteen academic hours that teach the students applications needed to manage social media content and campaign. Students receive instruction on social media effectiveness, analysis, content, and metrics. The Newhouse School of Public Communications at Syracuse University has joined the field of social media education by offering students an Advance Social Media Strategy Certificate. In partnership with Hootsuite, the curriculum offers a total of fifteen lessons that cover the topics of strategic planning process, content strategy, situation and environment analysis, and information management threats. During the course, the students learn insights on social media

⁶¹ University of Southern California, "Digital Social Media (MS)," accessed 28 February 2016, http://catalogue.usc.edu/preview_program.php?catoid=2&poid=1345&returnto=421.

⁶² University of Kansas William Allen White School of Journalism and Mass Communications, "Online Program in Digital Content Strategy," accessed 17 February 2016, <http://journalism.ku.edu/online-program-digital-content-strategy>.

influence, introduction to social media ecosystem, crisis management, information security, and issues related to privacy and protection of customer and employee data.

An article published by The International Association of Business Communicators suggests the importance of training employees to assist with social media engagement. The article mentions that some employees are engaged in social media and are ready to go above and beyond for the organization; guidance is necessary to ensure understanding and effectiveness. In its article, the company states that one of the best practices recommended is training for the employees. It points out that companies like PepsiCo, Sprint, Dell, and Nike are a few among many organizations that are in the process of creating internal social media training programs for their employees. It recommends that the training program should include ground rules in policy, social media outreach goals, and how employees can take part in the program.⁶³

Social media use comes with numerous considerations that organizations, businesses, and civilian industry companies must keep in mind during the implementation of their social media programs, particularly the business of understanding and preparing for issues that could involve employer and employees' lack of legal knowledge in the particulars associated with the use of social media. An article published in *The Licensing Journal*, suggests that organizations governed by U.S. law must consider certain legal issues that may arise during the use of social media by three different groups. Valeri Brennan points out that groups including the organization, employees, and third parties in

⁶³ International Association of Business Communicators, "Employee Advocates: The Hottest Thing in Corporate Communication Today," February 2013, accessed 16 March 2016, <https://www.iabc.com/employee-advocates-the-hottest-thing-in-corporate-communication-today>.

reference to the organization are group perspectives that the employer should keep in mind. Brennan mentions that many organizational goals bring issues that can be mitigated by establishing considerations in the planning process.⁶⁴ The author suggests that when establishing communication and enabling customer interaction with the company, understanding of copyright laws should be considered. The application of disclosure of company's internal information should not be posted without prior understanding of terms related to privacy and ownership.⁶⁵ The use of social media tools is a medium that, while effective and for the most part user friendly, brings areas that require attention and knowledge prior to the implementation and use of social network sites. Brennan recommends that telecommunication laws and regulations, public policy codes, disclosure agreements and policies, legal protection of individuals, rights of privacy and confidentiality obligations, understanding of terms and conditions applicable to social media outlets, and employment agreements associated with the use of social media sites must be carefully revised by the employer and the individuals engaged in the use of social media sites. The author summarizes the article by emphasizing that to develop an effective social media strategy, understanding of not only what is to be gained

⁶⁴ Valeri Brennan, "Navigating Social Media in the Business World," *The Licensing Journal*, (January 2010): 8, accessed 15 February 2016, http://fw8pk7vf4q.search.serialssolutions.com/?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2004&ctx_enc=info%3Aofi%2Fenc%3AUTF-8&rft_id=info:sid/summon.serialssolutions.com&rft_val_fmt=info:ofi/fmt:kev:mtx:journal&rft.genre=article&rft.atitle=Navigating+social+media+in+the+business+world&rft.jtitle=The+Licensing+Journal&rft.au=Brennan%2C+Valerie&rft.date=2010-01-01&rft.pub=Aspen+Publishers%2C+Inc&rft.issn=1040-4023&rft.volume=30&rft.issue=1&rft.page=8&rft.externalDBID=IAO&rft.externalDocID=215923301¶mdict=en-US.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 9.

is important, but also the training and education of employees in the guidelines and policies of the organization is vital.⁶⁶

In June 2014, the Strategic Communication and Public Relations Center of the University of Southern California published “Generally Accepted Practices, Report 1: Corporate Findings, Gap VIII: Eighth Communications and Public Relations Generally Accepted Practices Study (Q4 2013 data)” (GAP study). The results of these biennial GAP studies provide senior communicators with timely guidance and recommendations to develop strategy and preparation for their organizations.⁶⁷ The GAP study is a source that practitioners utilize to identify trends and effective ways to improve the public relations and communications field and the implications. GAP is considered the most comprehensive study of its type that serves the profession of public relations and communications. The data presents information that includes eight communication and public relations generally accepted practices. The GAP study indicates that 347 senior communicators participated during the research study, and answered fifty questions. Members of communications professional associations that include the Arthur W. Paige Society, the Institute for Public Relations, the International Association of Business Communicators, and the Public Relations Society of America, participated in the survey. The key findings produced by the study include topics related to organization’s budget

⁶⁶ Brennan, 12.

⁶⁷ University of Southern California, “Generally Accepted Practices. Report 1: Corporate Findings, Gap VIII: Eighth Communications and Public Relations Generally Accepted Practices Study (Q4 2013 data)” (Annenberg School of Communication and Journalism, Strategic Communications and Public Relations Center, draft, 12 June 2014), accessed 16 February 2016, <http://ascjweb.org/gapstudy/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/GAP-VIII-Presentation-Final-6.12.2014.pdf>. Hereafter referred to as GAP study.

increase, increase of staff personnel, social media techniques, measurement and evaluation techniques, agency relationships, public relations and communications role in organizational success, and collaboration and effectiveness in relationship to public relations and communication. The study presents data reflecting the use of web-related functions in the media environment. The value provided to each media technique ranges between 1 (none) and 7 (extensive usage). The data related to the popularity of organization's own media channels reveals an increase over the last two years from an average of 4.33 to 5.11 (on a 1-7 scale), reflecting for example, an increase compared to the previous study in the use of Twitter as a corporate communications platform.⁶⁸ However, the use of Facebook during the same period remained low. The increase in web-related functions between GAP VII and VIII is shown in table 4.

⁶⁸ University of Southern California, "Generally Accepted Practices," 63.

Table 4. The Media Environment			
	Mean		Mean
Creating content designed to be spread via social media	5.16	Multimedia content for mobile devices	3.72
Twitter	5.11	Television	3.31
Production of online videos	5.01	Radio	2.81
Facebook	4.77	Google Plus	2.68
Print newspapers	4.75	Online audio (e.g. podcasts)	2.62
Using two or more social or sharing media platforms in one campaign	4.72	Instagram	2.37
Print magazines	4.70	Crowdsourcing	2.19
Sharing of online videos	4.65	Pinterest	2.01
YouTube	4.64	Wiki	2.02
Search Engine Optimization	4.58	Vine	1.87
LinkedIn	4.36	Other	1.64
Creating content in partnership with external audiences	4.27		
Online editorial websites	4.09		

Source: University of Southern California, “Generally Accepted Practices. Report 1: Corporate Findings, Gap VIII: Eighth Communications and Public Relations Generally Accepted Practices Study (Q4 2013 data)” (Annenberg School of Communication and Journalism, Strategic Communications and Public Relations Center, draft, 12 June 2014), accessed 16 February 2016, <http://ascjweb.org/gapstudy/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/GAP-VIII-Presentation-Final-6.12.2014.pdf>, 61. Note: Extent of Usage Scale (1-7).

GAP results indicate that new social media tools and techniques include multimedia content for editorial devices like Crowdsourcing, Pinterest, and Vine. According to the GAP, the five most used media techniques and channels in rank order within the established scale are: content created to be spread by social media, Twitter, production of on-line videos, Facebook, and print newspaper.⁶⁹ The survey indicates that respondent’s data suggests the increase of organizations’ internal departments use of

⁶⁹ University of Southern California, “Generally Accepted Practices.”

social media. Although the increase shows the importance of using social media, it could affect the messaging. The increase in web-related functions between GAP VII and VIII is shown in table 5.

Table 5. Functions and Responsibilities Percentage			
Function/Responsibility	2011	2013	Change
Issues management	58%	71%	+13%
Social media participation	66%	74%	+8%
Multimedia production	40%	47%	+7%
Search engine optimization	31%	37%	+6%
Social media monitoring	70%	72%	+2%
Internal communications	80%	77%	-3%
Customer relations	15%	12%	-3%

Source: University of Southern California, “Generally Accepted Practices. Report 1: Corporate Findings, Gap VIII: Eighth Communications and Public Relations Generally Accepted Practices Study (Q4 2013 data)” (Annenberg School of Communication and Journalism, Strategic Communications and Public Relations Center, draft, 12 June 2014), accessed 16 February 2016), <http://ascjweb.org/gapstudy/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/GAP-VIII-Presentation-Final-6.12.2014.pdf>, 58.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Problem Statement

The basis for the conduct of this research relies on the assumption that additional training focused on the use social media platforms by U.S. Army PAOs should be established in the form of additional academic hours added to current instruction programs or as a stand-alone course required for PAOs. The current information environment continues to evolve, and the impact of using social media platforms and its influence on key audiences' engagement are only likely to increase. The relevance that social media tools represent in the contemporary information environment demonstrate the importance of considering formal and required social media training to compliment guidance, directives, and organization requirements as established by DoD and the U.S. Army for the effective use of social media platforms. The increase in demand for communication through social media platforms, and the responsibility of PAOs for social media programs could potentially expose a gap in the current training requirements. The impact produced by the use of social media demonstrates the value of knowledge that PAOs must possess to effectively manage social media tools.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the training offered to U.S. Army PAOs in the use of social media platforms to determine if the currently established courses and education requirements meet the needed understanding and knowledge to satisfy the PAO social media engagement responsibilities. The education and training on the use of social

media platforms should augment the general knowledge and understanding of PAOs to communicate commander's messages through the emerging social media platforms. Responsibility to inform the public internally and externally takes the form of traditional and non-traditional methods. Social media training augments the ability to communicate key messages through online popular outlets. The definitions and description of the social media platforms currently known in the digital world provide the context for the purposes of this study. During the conduct of the study, social media will be defined according to *Merriam-Webster*. The term social media is described as forms of electronic communication (such as websites for social networking and micro blogging) through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content (such as videos).⁷⁰ Heidi Cohen's Actionable Marketing Guide suggests that social media platforms include: Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google, YouTube, Pinterest, Instagram, and Slideshare.⁷¹ According to the Decidedly Social media website, a company that offers social media marketing solutions for business, current social media platforms include: social networking sites, micro blogging sites, publishing tools, collaboration tools, photo and video sharing sites, personal broadcasting tools, virtual words, location based services, widgets, social bookmarking and news aggregation, and group buying. The DoD utilizes IBC to disseminate and process unclassified information. DoD defines Internet-based capabilities as all public information capabilities or applications across the Internet from locations not directly or indirectly controlled by DoD or the federal government (locations not owned or operated

⁷⁰ Merriam-Webster.

⁷¹ Cohen.

by DoD or another federal agency or by contractors or others on behalf of DoD or another federal agency).⁷²

The knowledge and preparation that PAOs obtain allow them to effectively synchronize the communication across tactical, operational, and strategic levels. Therefore, the level of preparation and understanding of the use of social media platforms to communicate the organization's messages, and engagement with key audiences has a significant impact on communicating through the use of social media tools. U.S. Army PAOs could expand effectiveness on audience engagement, and advance communication priorities through formalized and required social media use training integrated in FA 46 training.

Research Questions

The study of social media training offered to U.S. Army PAOs intends to analyze and understand how the current training meets the necessity established through the use of social media in U.S. Army organizations specifically employed by PAOs. To obtain information and data that assist in the research and analysis, the following questions have been proposed:

1. How does PAO training provide understanding and knowledge in the use of social media platforms?
2. How do current training courses validate PAOs' preparation in the use of social media platforms?

⁷² Department of Defense Chief Information Office, DoD Instruction 8550.01, 47.

3. What are possible solutions to address the potential need of establishing additional social media platform training for PAOs?

The research design established to explore the existing training provided to PAOs, and how it relates to the research questions is depicted in figure 2.

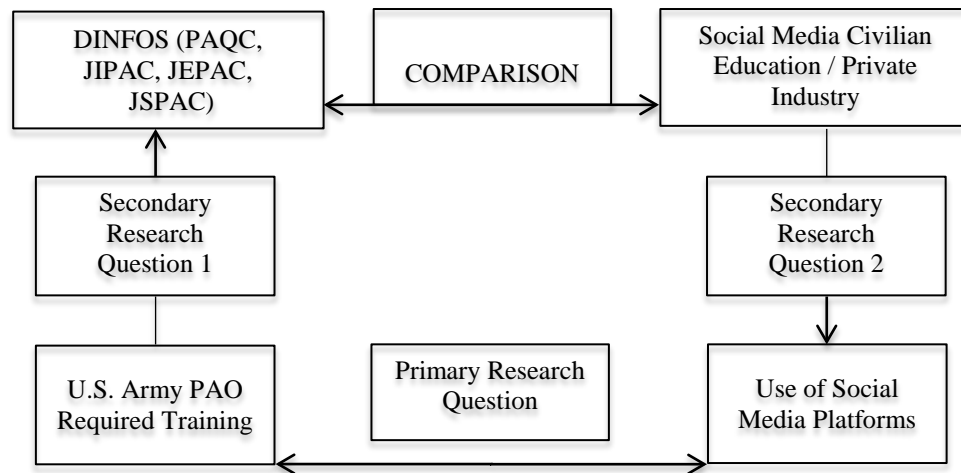


Figure 2. Research Design Model

Source: Created by author. The research design is created to explain and determine what type of social media training is needed in comparison to the existent course and established opportunities in civilian and private industry.

Qualitative Design

The case study design is applied to this research because it provides the author an approach that facilitates the integration of data from a specific activity and area studied. This design approach allows for the introduction of inquiries and evaluation of the documents, and information presented in the literature review in an exploratory manner linked to the assumption made by the author. The approach is appropriate to this study

because it allows the author to present and compare the curricula, guidance, education, and training programs utilized in civilian and private industry training, and DINFOS.

Researcher's Role

The role of the researcher is to explore, collect, and analyze information related to the use of social media platforms training provided to PAOs through courses offered at DINFOS. The same approach is utilized to conduct research and identify information that explains the required training for students attending social media courses and programs at civilian institutions and the available opportunities for civilian employees and social media communication practitioners in the private sector. The relationship of the author with the research is found through the researcher's professional education and involvement as a PAO. Experiencing the training received as a PAO, and involvement in the application of the use of social media platforms in U.S. Army organizations provides the author with a personal and professional perspective on the research subject.

The understanding and knowledge obtained through training, and how effective and important the use of social media platforms is can potentially influence the conduct of this research study. It is the intent of the author to ensure that the research process is free of any bias due to the author's professional experience in public affairs and how the use of social media had been employed. The elements of planning, data collection, analysis, and interpretation of the study will be performed with the use of information collected and presented in the literature review. The author's knowledge and experience is employed solely for research, explanation, and development of the study subject. Although the experience of the author is evident by six years in the field of PA that includes training, deployment, and PA duties in military garrison environments, the

author intends to prevent a personal position that leans towards favorable conclusions of the research.

Data Collection

The data collected for the purpose of this study includes digital copies of current curricula and programs of instruction available through the DINFOS web portal. The courses offered at DINFOS include required initial entry-level qualification training, and subsequent PA courses identified in the PAO professional development model. The PA training consists of a series of resident courses offered at DINFOS that include: PAQC, JIPAC, JEPAC, and JSPAC. The presentation and description of U.S. Army social media policies and best practices is explored to present additional aspects of social media guidance within the U.S. Army. Civilian education programs and school's curricula information are utilized as part of the literature of the study to present the civilian aspect in regards to the use of social media platforms. The study includes the private industry sector, specifically in the public relations and communicator's arena to assist in the understanding of the training offered and recommended by practitioners and educators in the private sectors. The areas mentioned above have been purposefully selected to establish the framework within the subject of the study. The civilian and private industry education and training institutions and organizations selected for this study include: Hootsuite; Lawrence Ragan Communications Incorporated; Boot Camp Digital; University of Southern California, Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism; University of Kansas, William Allen White School of Journalism and Mass Communications; and Syracuse University, Newhouse School of Public Communications.

Data Recording Procedures

The data recording procedure employed in this research consists of information collected from the description of courses and training offered and available in the areas selected for the study. The areas used to establish a comparison of training in the use of social media training include military, civilian education, and private industry. Each course and training opportunity selected for the study will be examined to provide understanding of the different training programs established. The model utilized will answer the primary and secondary research questions in addition to comparison of the curricula and training models established in the military, private, and civilian industry to assist in the presentation of findings. Using three questions as the basic criteria the author attempts to identify indicators during the interpretation of the information to assist in identifying a possible gap in the current training offered to PAOs, specifically in the use of social media platforms. The use of a comparison model/table to present different courses descriptions and models will serve as the method to focus and compare the data.

Data Analysis

The information gathered from the research sources will be used to present a comparison between military institution, civilian, and private industry social media course and training. Additionally, presentation of the various curricula helps to facilitate an explanation about the training in the use of social media platforms and the methods of instruction utilized by the different institutions. The information gathered will present the initial training requirements for PAOs in terms of understanding, qualification requirements, and knowledge in the use of social media as suggested through FM 3-61, Joint Doctrine Note 2-13, and DA PAM 600. The documents will establish the point of

departure to offer the qualifications and recommendations in regards to PAOs' training and education requirements. This information will be compared to the description of courses offered in the civilian and private industry education and training institutions. This will allow the author to convey findings in the comparison of the courses and programs in the presented areas. The author will establish that PAOs, public relations personnel, and communicator's use of social media platforms share common ground within the information environment. Through the description of the courses and programs, and comparison of the areas of study that describe the type of social media training programs, completion requirements, and methods of training and purpose, the author will present through a case study approach findings that answer the proposed research questions. The author's purpose in identifying and describing distinct courses and training is to compare the curriculum description and requirements associated with learning how to use social media platforms.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS

The literature review and research findings provide the data required to present the analysis of the research study. The requirements and guidelines established by DoD, Department of the Army, field manuals, and doctrine, policies and memorandums provide the guidance that PAOs must follow and adhere to when communicating with local, national, and international publics. PAOs must facilitate the communication of the commander with internal and external audiences to include the use of social media as a conduit during the process. DA PAM 600-3 states that PAOs must skillfully know the potential of using social media, and recognize the direct influence these tools denote.⁷³ Responsibilities of the PAO include serving as an advisor to the commander on how to communicate with key audiences thorough the use of social media, and provide the commander recommendations on how to employ use of the tools available to include its effectiveness.

The Army Public Affairs Officer Development Model describes the assignments, and educational requirements for officers assessed in the FA 46 officer career. The model establishes that officers selected through the Voluntary Transfer Incentive Program with approximately four years of service, must attend PAQC prior to serving in a FA 46 assignment. The PAQC requirements include ten functional areas focused on the elements of the communication planning process, principles, and techniques associated with implementing effective communication strategies, and the process involved in

⁷³ Headquarters, Department of the Army, DA PAM 600-3, 256.

integrating communication into military planning. As established in DA PAM 600-3 and FM 3-61, PAOs must employ the use of social media and be knowledgeable on the use of different platforms. PAOs must produce and employ communication plans that address public information, command information, and community engagement. These plans include the establishment of Proposed Public Affairs Guidance. The guidance and execution of these plans must include the employment and effect of social media. Sources utilized by PAOs indicate that methods use to communicate with the public must include, traditional, non-traditional, and social media mediums. The functional areas described in the PAQC curriculum that includes training and discussion on the use social media platforms is limited to one specific block of instruction, and the information according to the curriculum does not expand on validation of knowledge on its application. The course description shows that students learn the aspects of communication in key areas that include PAO roles and information of the principles, fundamentals, and how PAOs synchronize communication strategies at the tactical and operational level. The PA qualification course program of instruction, which includes 351 academic hours, focuses on the preparation of writing skills, media engagement, news analysis, planning process from the PA perspective, communication engagement planning and strategies, and communication principles. The description of the training outcome upon completion of functional area three states the inclusion of the examination of the principles of IBC engagement strategies and best practices. The lesson explains that students learn to identify IBC outlets, tactics, techniques, and procedures for its employment during communication strategies. According to the plan, students learn the details of the IBC environment, tools, platforms and technology developments. According to the PAQC

curriculum, students engage in the use of social media platforms. This description meets the guidance and requirements established in manual and policies to include the publication of DoD Instruction 8550.01.

The PAO developmental model suggests that FA 46 requirements at approximately ten years of service must include PAQC, JEPAC, and JIPAC. These courses along with the branch requirements that include completion of Military Education Level 4 should prepare FA 46 officers to perform in key developmental positions at the brigade and division level, and Mobile Public Affairs Detachment commander. The instruction presented during JEPAC training emphasizes the PAO role in contingency operations. Its focus throughout the seventy-six academic hours of instruction covers aspects of operations in deployed environments. The application of social media platforms in communicating with various audiences still applies to the responsibilities of the PAO in less mature environments and is explained during the course. JEPAC offers mid-career level PAOs the opportunity to expand their knowledge and understanding of instruction received during the initial qualification course with emphasis in contingency operations, and the operational planning, but leaves any new practices or review of new applications outside the scope of the course.

Training outcomes identified through examination of the JIPAC training program of instruction demonstrates that during this course, PAOs expand their knowledge in areas of communication that include ethical principles of communications, operational environment strategic communication policies, legal considerations, advisory role, and media operations in joint environments. In a similar fashion as the JEPAC, this course aims at a level of instruction that emphasizes aspects of operational environment that

include planning, management, and the aspects of communications while working with other government agencies and non-U.S. government organizations. However, these courses train students on particular innovations and trends in emerging media capabilities.

The JSPAC offers FA 46 officers an opportunity to develop skills as senior communication counselors and strategic planners. The course focuses on discussion and learning at the senior level that examines national level policy and DoD joint public affairs doctrine. The course emphasizes the study of theater level strategy and campaign plans from the PA perspective. A block of instruction dedicated to the information environment includes communication best practices and planning and implementation of evaluation tools. The description of functional areas does not reflect specific academic hours on the use of social media platforms, although it could be assumed that discussion during best practices in the information environment block of instruction covers the aspects of social media platforms.

Civilian and private practitioners, to include public relations officers and students at civilian institutions will require certain skills and certifications to be able to effectively perform duties that involve the use of social media platforms. Similar to the initial preparation offered to PAOS at DINFOS, civilian practitioners must be proficient in the content analysis and understanding of social media platforms. Some of the preparation road maps indicate the need for certificates on the use of social media to include knowledge in management and understanding of the capabilities that these platforms offer. Often the practitioners must have a solid base of education in communications and marketing that enhances the understanding of social media.

From the four courses offered to PAOs at DINFOS, only the PAQC specifically identifies discussion of IBC tools, platforms, technology trends, and social media discussion as part of their training outcome. Although the courses offered to PAOs throughout their career do not specifically present a form to validate the knowledge in the use of social media, discussion on its employment and capabilities is covered during some of the instruction. The absence of a stand-alone social media course or requirement presents a possible gap in an area within the information environment that has a significant impact in the way communicators engaged with their audience. The increase in the use social media platforms is reflected in the GAP study conducted by the University of Southern California, Strategic Communication and Public Relations Center of the. The study demonstrates an increase of eight percent in social media participation, and a two percent increase in social media monitoring.⁷⁴ The results from private industry companies and organizations show the impact and significance that private sector communicators observed in the use of social media. The value and impact on military organizations and the potential benefits that offers has been suggested through the support of military leaders that have adopted and embraced the use of social media tools. The increased speed and access to social media is acknowledged at the DA headquarters level through the creation of the Social Media Division and the continuous efforts to guide Army organizations in the use of social media with assistance and guidance provided in the *United States Army Social Media Handbook* and the U.S. Army Slideshare page. Although these documents and sources are not classified as mandatory training or requirements for PAOs, the suggestions on best practices and tools available

⁷⁴ University of Southern California, “Generally Accepted Practices,” 58.

through these sources assist social media managers and PAOs with the application of programs in the use of social media applicable to Army organizations.

The need for training of current and future communicators in the civilian and private industry has led to the implementation of education and training courses aimed at maximizing the use of social media tools and increasing understanding of the capabilities that this method of communication offers. It has also created opportunities for civilian and private organizations to offer certifications to individuals in the use of social media tools. In an information environment in which PAOs and private industry communicators share similar responsibilities when it comes to the effective ways to engage with the public, the communicators in the civilian sector seem to have a wide range of opportunities to enhance their knowledge in the use of social media. The private industry offers public relations and public information practitioners multiple ways to improve their effectiveness through conferences, online webinars, and interactive courses. Opportunities for PAOs to expand their knowledge in the use of social media platforms are limited to lessons covered during the PAQC course. Additional courses touched on the subject, but according to the curricula the social media subject is not the main topic. Other opportunities for additional training and education in social media are through individual interest in applying for Department of the Army selected process for attendance at Georgetown University's degree in Public Relations and Corporate Communications. Contrary to limited opportunities offered to PAOs, public practitioners can advance their knowledge and receive various types of certifications through opportunities offered through Boot Camp Digital, Hootsuite, and Lawrence Ragan Communications Incorporated. Training through these organizations takes the form of

interactive workshops, webcasts, and online modules and it offers practitioners the opportunity to not only enhance their knowledge on the latest trends and best practices, but also to earn social media certification.

Civilian institutions offer opportunities through on-campus and on-line programs on social media. Future practitioners enrolled in social media educational programs receive education and training from institutions in which their respective curricula offer between thirty and fifteen lessons dedicated exclusively to programs and degrees in the use of social media. The comparison of civilian, private, and military institutions offers a general overview of the training inequality between PAOs and private/civilian practitioners. However, the curricula from the three main civilian education institutions and DINFOS share a few common topics that include analytics, social media management, engagement, and content. The training provided through the organizations from civilian education and private industry allow practitioners in the field of social media multiple opportunities to advance knowledge in the use of platforms, and to ensure communicators increase benefits through multiple online and on-campus options. Table 6 offers an overview of the comparison of the curricula and opportunities offered to personnel involved in the use of social media tools in military, civilian, and private industry.

Table 6. Comparison of Social Media Course by Institution					
Institutions	Is the use of social media capabilities explained in the training?		Is the use of social media platforms employed in the course or training?		Employed method of training? (Webinar, Online, Webcast, Interactive course, On-campus)
	Yes	No	Yes	No	
DINFOS/Military Institution					
PAQC	X		X		On-campus
JIPAC		X		X	On-campus
JEPAC		X	X		On-campus
JSPAC		X		X	On-campus
Civilian Education Institution (Social Media Degrees)					
1. University of Southern California, Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism	X		X		On-campus
2. University of Kansas, William Allen White School of Journalism and Mass Communications	X		X		Online
3. Syracuse University, Newhouse School of Public Communications	X		X		Online
Private Industry (Social Media Certification/Training)					
1. Hootsuite	X		X		Online/Webinars
2. Lawrence Ragan Communications Inc.	X		X		Online/Interactive Course
3. Boot Camp Digital	X		X		Online/Interactive

Source: Created by author. Comparison of use and employment of social media platforms and methods as part of the institution curricula and the method used to offer training and education.

The U.S. Army and DoD emphasize the responsibilities and methods to engage in social media in accordance with its policies and guidance, but according to the documents reviewed during this study, requirements for the use of social media by PAOs remains at the PAQC course for the most part. The only supplements to this training are the

documents provided by the U.S. Army Social Media Division, and the individual willingness of PA practitioners to enhance their knowledge through opportunities offered by private and civilian institutions. While the private sector and civilian industry offer a vast amount of resources recommended for personnel responsible for effective use of social media platforms, PAOs across the U.S. Army rely only on lessons that teach the use of social media platforms and technology trends at the very beginning of the officer's career as a PAO. Courses required for positions of higher responsibility according to the rank and type of organization seem to examine the area of social media platforms, but the emphasis is minimal according to the information reflected in the training programs published. Results of the study show that civilian and private industry, and the military share some similarities in the use of social media platforms. The necessity to improve knowledge and efficiency in the ways to communicate with key audiences through the use of emerging tools in the information environment are common for the military and the civilian counterparts. The responsibility and the need have been established by the military as an institution that requires its PAOs to be proficient at this particular task. A stand-alone course or additional training that offers PAOs the opportunity to improve their skills in the use of social media platforms would enable them to improve their ability to identify new methods and opportunities as well as to provide a more efficient and effective way to advise commanders in the use of these platforms, and engage internal and external audiences.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the training offered to U.S. Army PAOs in the use of social media platforms to determine if the current established courses and education requirements meet the needed understanding and knowledge to satisfy the PAO social media engagement responsibilities. The education and training in the use of social media platforms should augment the general knowledge and understanding of PAOs to communicate commander's messages through the emerging social media platforms. The responsibility to inform the public internally and externally takes the form of traditional and non-traditional methods. Social media training augments the ability to communicate key messages through popular online outlets.

The research and findings answer the following questions:

1. How does PAO training provide understanding and knowledge in the use of social media platforms?
2. How do current training courses validate PAOs preparation in the use of social media platforms?
3. What are possible solutions to address the potential need for establishing additional social media platform training for PAOs?

Findings

The courses established at DINFOS provide the education and training needed for PAOs to execute responsibilities that include providing advice and counsel to the

commander in PA issues, and exercising duties to inform internal and external audiences. The courses established as the required training and education needed for PAOs offer students the opportunity to acquire the knowledge of the fundamentals to communicate the story of the U.S. Army and its organizations. The requirements for the development and career progression of PAOs offer the opportunity to learn and understand the fundamentals necessary for communicators to perform their duties across the operational environment. The lessons consisting of planning, coordination execution, and establishment of PA operations, offer the students the different levels of PA activities through theory and practice. As stated in the beginning of the thesis, the adoption of social media platforms to communicate with various audiences have been virtually embraced by the majority of U.S. Army organizations. The emergence of social media platforms as perhaps one of the primary communication tools has become extremely relevant within the U.S. Army. The DoD and U.S. Army have established policies and guidance through directives and memorandums that communicate the guidelines and responsibilities for the effective use of IBC, to include social networking services. The guidance and purpose for the DoD and U.S. Army organizations have been established through the publication of documents that provide direction for the official standardization of the U.S. Army's external official presence in social media by the Office of the Chief of Public Affairs, Online and Social Media Division.⁷⁵ The DoD and U.S. Army have made social media a component of the communication methods used by military organizations. The publication of DoD Directive 8550.01 establishes the policy

⁷⁵ Director, Online and Social Media Division, *Standardizing Official U.S. Army External Official Presences (Social Media)*.

for DoD and U.S. Army organizations to use IBC capabilities to process unclassified information. According to the findings of the study, PAO personnel and military organizations rely on the knowledge of DINFOS qualified personnel, the *United States Army Social Media Handbook*, and the U.S. Army on Social Media webpage to implement social media programs. The documents establishing policy, regulations, and guidance serve as the primary resources for personnel to follow in the use of the social media capabilities.

The education and training of PAOs in the use of social media platform is limited to the training received at DINFOS. The current Army Public Affairs Development Model establishes the required training for the PA functional area, and presents PAQC, JEPAC, JIPAC, and JSPAC as the courses needed or required for PAOs to further prepare and advance through their career. The DINFOS courses represent only PA related training and education in the career developmental process of PAOs. From the four curriculums established to prepare U.S. Army communicators to perform their duties in the field, only one course curriculum provides students with specific and perhaps formally dedicated academic hours to lessons and topics related to social media platforms. From a total of seventeen functional areas of training throughout four different courses, only one program of instruction during the PAQC training includes subjects related to IBC tools, platforms, technology trends, and social media discussion as part of their training outcome. The comparison table demonstrates that civilian and private industry offers various forms of training to ensure communicators receive up to date training to increase their knowledge in the area of social media. The curricula and education and training programs from the institutions examined require and include

subjects related to the use of social media platforms to include theory and practice to validate the student's knowledge in the use of social media tools. Similar instruction and education is offered to PAOs, but a formal validation focused individually in the area of social media is currently absent in the requirements established for U.S. Army officers. The findings point at the social media tools as an area of discussion among communications and PA subjects. The programs offered in civilian institutions aimed to provide certifications for social media manager, consist of an average of fifteen to twenty lessons of required instruction before awarding a degree that certifies the individual knowledge to perform duties related to the management and use of social media platforms.

Need for Training

The need for PAOs to expand their knowledge is justified by the responsibilities clearly established and associated with the functions to inform and communicate with audiences inside and outside of the organization. Social media platforms allow military organizations to maintain and disseminate information necessary to achieve the goals of the commander. The use of social media platforms to reach the audience is a necessity that changes continuously as the techniques and methods continuously develop. The requirement for FA 46 personnel to effectively perform duties and tasks related to the use of social media platforms relies on established regulations and responsibilities. The development of social media networks as methods that allow communicators to rapidly and effectively engage with key audiences is evident across the operational and information environments. The necessity and importance of the impact of social media is reflected through the steps taken by DoD and the U.S. Army to adopt and establish

informal and formal protocols for the use methods that help to amplify the engagement of various audiences through the use of social media platforms. The need for PAOs to be proficient in the tasks related to the use of social media are clearly established in FM 3-61, Joint Doctrine Note 2-13, AR 360-1 and DA PAM 600-3. PAOs must achieve the communication and information goals through public information, command information, and community engagement functions which present opportunities for the use of social media platforms to achieve the communication goals. Finally, DA PAM 600-3 describes PAOs required characteristics that include the need for FA 46 officers to be skilled in the use of social media platforms as these are mediums that represent opportunities significantly important in the process of supporting the commander's task to inform.⁷⁶

Opportunities

Instruction and training opportunities can be implemented to fulfill the need for training that can potentially amplify and expand the knowledge and preparation of PAOs. Additional opportunities can be established by following the educational programs and curricula models used by private and civilian industry. The partnerships with the institutions and organizations that specialize in the areas of social media management present themselves as sources the DoD and the U.S. Army could use to explore for possible education and training opportunities. New educational opportunities based on private and civilian industry models can help to expand and implement new requirements that not only can validate the understanding and proficiency of military communicators, but could also serve as models to improve the current training in the use of social media.

⁷⁶ Headquarters, Department of the Army, DA PAM 600-3.

Partnerships with the purpose of educating and training soldiers are nothing new to the DoD or U.S. Army.

Partnership education programs offer an opportunity to expand knowledge and can provide military personnel additional certifications that not only benefit the individual, but the organization as well. Civilian educational institutions can help develop the skills of service members. Universities and colleges can assist in improving the training and preparation of PAOs in the use of social media through a combination of civilian credentials, and military training to help the U.S. Army better prepare its force for future challenges in the information environment and the social media arena.

The establishment of civilian and military training and education has been previously adopted at military installations. The Womack Army Medical Center and Fayetteville Technical Community College, both located in the Fort Bragg, NC area established a program that assists U.S. Army medics to improve their medical skills.⁷⁷ A similar training program that offers service members the opportunity to train and advance their skills that produce benefits for the military organization and the individual was implemented in the same region in a partnership established between a local military unit and the city of Fayetteville. Non-commissioned officers assigned to a Fort Bragg military police unit attended the Fayetteville Police Department Basic Law Enforcement and

⁷⁷ Drew Brooks, "Fort Bragg, FTCC Partner to Bring New Skills to Local Army Medics," *FayObserver*, 3 March 2016, accessed 16 March 2016, http://www.fayobserver.com/military/fort-bragg-ftcc-partner-to-bring-new-skills-to-local/article_8e6f6edc-197e-5aec-ba7a-1bb534db21ac.html.

Training Academy to help soldiers build proficiency and learn techniques and new skills offered through a civilian law enforcement academy.⁷⁸

Recommendations

The U.S. Army provides resources that assist PAOs with the establishment of the social media programs. The implementation of the U.S. Army Slideshare page with over one hundred presentations enables FA 46 personnel and social media managers tools and examples to establish and improve the organization's communication through social media venues. The U.S. Army social media webpage offers a significant amount of resources that can help to integrate social media policies, guidance and resources to newly established or well developed social media programs. However, the lack of current and existing instruction and training programs that benefit PAOs and help to adapt to the changes and evolution of the social media environment needs to be further addressed. Changes or additions to improve the current training and education of PAOs in the use of social media platforms can produce benefits. Establishing new courses or lessons dedicated to topics in the area of social media can potentially expand the capacity and capability of PAOs and military organizations to reach their key audiences. Increasing the academic hours of currently established DINFOS courses can provide the opportunity for training specifically dedicated to the social media tools. A stand-alone course that exclusively validates the performance of PAOs in the use of social media tools to include, analytics, management, context, and development of plans and social media campaigns

⁷⁸ 1LT Jonathan Hillir, USA, "Military Police Graduate from Police Academy," *Paraglide*, 12 February 2015, accessed 16 March 2016, http://www.paraglideonline.net/news/article_98caf306-b2e1-11e4-9b13-97764ffca49f.html.

could be established through an on-campus or online program. This can potentially be included in the professional development path of FA 46 officers. A potential training requirement for PAOs could help in the establishment of social media programs with mandatory instruction before assuming primary or key positions at the brigade or division level.

Areas for Further Research

The research conducted throughout this project focused on education and training curricula associated to the preparation of U.S. Army PAOs in the use of social media platforms. Considering the scope and delimitations of the research, the following areas should be further explored for additional research and evaluation:

1. Expectations and suggestions from PAOs and social media managers within U.S. Army organizations.
2. Recommendations and feedback from established Training with Industry Program managers.
3. Analysis of requirements and benefits from currently established partnership programs between military units and local or regional education partners.

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